

The United States House of Representatives
Committee on Agriculture's Field hearings
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Wife: Ivey Henton
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My family is the 7th and 8th generations on our Central Kentucky farm located in Kentucky's 6th district. (The Honorable Representative Ben Chandler). Our land was acquired as a land grant (prior to KY's statehood) from the Virginia State Legislature in 1780.

Henton Farms operation presently consists of corn, soybeans, wheat, hay and straw with a cow/calf and steer background program. In addition, my son raises fresh water prawns on the farm. However, the major enterprise is Burley TOBACCO.

Since I started farming in 1975 we have diversified our operation to include an Orchard with a farmers market. We have also raised asparagus, spinach, and bell peppers in addition to sheep, hogs and horses.

However (maybe like a smoker), when it comes to paying the bills and the mortgage, it's still Tobacco. We just can't quit the stuff.

Perhaps my Father or Grandfather or Great-great Grandfather could have chosen to raise corn, wheat or maybe hops, grapes or malting barley. Instead, farms in this region chose tobacco and the grazing of livestock because it made more sense.

The Tobacco works especially well here because it fits our land configurations, our soil types and our climate. It requires only a small acreage base, a fact of particular importance considering our limited amount of tillable land and its highly-erodeable nature. There is a very high risk of environmental damage if the region were to be converted to other large scale field crops.

As my biography states in addition to farming for 30 years, I was the Executive Director of USDA's Farm Service Agency in Kentucky from 1993 to 2000. I wish to draw on those experiences to address the 2007 farm bill today.

The past federal farm bills (5 to 7 years in length) had little impact on this region as a result of direct involvement of USDA or Congress. Livestock have not ever had titles in past Farm Bills. Tobacco has not been a part of farm bill debate since the legislation of 1938 and 1949. These 1938 and 1949 bills, created through "permanent provisions", allowed tobacco to be one of the most protected of US crops through strict price supports and production adjustments (quotas).

The recent Tobacco Buyout changed all of that. Today farms in our region are now among the least affected by farm bills in this country. ALL laws and regulations concerning tobacco are now gone. Beside Price Support and quotas being eliminated; export /import inspection, pesticide regulations, and information from Ag Marketing Services concerning acres planted and yield reports have all disappeared. The FSA does not require acreage reports or yields reports, nor do conservation compliance issue concerning our farms effect FSA.

So when the farm leaders of this region are asked about the 2007 farm bill; many are bit confused as to what the role of congress should be as it relates to livestock or tobacco farmers.

I would NEVER expect a return to past farm legislation nor would I hope for inclusion into a feed grain type program such as: AMTA payments, target prices, Counter cyclical payments, LDP payments or having non-recourse commodity loans.

What we need is INCLUSION in the broad debate over non-program crops and livestock. The livestock and fruits/ vegetable growers of this country are indeed US farmers. As such the 2007 farm bill needs to address our farms and farm family needs.

All future farm bills need the following:

1. Weather and other natural disasters are a primary concern. Inclusion of our farm enterprises in improved federal crop insurance is vital.
2. Additionally, a permanent disaster program title should be included for catastrophic conditions.
3. Conservation titles must allow for more farms in this region to benefit from "Green Payments" such as Equip, CRP, Security Programs or carbon banking.
4. Crop and yield history data needs to be collected by USDA in order to equitably assist farms in times of yield or price crisis.
5. FSA (FmHA) loans must be made available to this regions farmers.
6. The farm bills in the future must take into consideration the effects on US farms and farm families of trade policies, embargos, the impact of international tensions on world trade (oil prices input cost and loss of exports), and WTO Doha Round policies and programs.
7. Livestock farms need country of origin labeling (COOL) in place now.
8. An affordable (to farmers) animal ID program is needed.
9. Borders defendable from diseased livestock imports.
10. Stricter enforcement of the Packers and Stockyard Act.

Information required from non-government witnesses

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4. Henton Farms, Inc.
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Farm Credit System (PCA) 1970- 1975
Governor (Kentucky) Office of Ag Policy 2000 -2002
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6. B.S. degree in Agricultural Economics, Purdue University
KY Farm Bureau State Board Member
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Required witness disclosure form

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1. none
2. none

Please note form non- applicable